

JOAN OF THE SWORD HAND

By S. R. CROCKETT, Author of *The Road to Reno*
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CHAPTER V.

Johann, the Secretary.

Ten miles outside the boundary of the little hill state of Kernsberg, the embassy of Plassenburg was met by another cavalcade bearing additional instructions from the Princess Helene. The leader was a slender youth of middle height, the accuracy of whose form gave evidence of much agility. He was dark-skinned, of an olive complexion, and with black hair which curled crisply about his small head. His eyes were dark and fine, looking straight and boldly out upon all comers.

"Your Excellency," he said to the Ambassador, "I bring you the most recent instructions from their Highnesses Hugo and Helene of Plassenburg. They sojourn for the time being in the city of Thorn, where they build a new palace for themselves. I was brought from Hamburg to be one of the master builders. I have skill in plans, and I bring you these for your approval and in order to go over the rates of cost with you, as Treasurer of the Plassenburg and the Wolfmark."

Dessauer took, with every token of deference, the sheaf of papers so carefully enveloped and sealed with the seal of Plassenburg.

"I thank you for your diligence, good master architect," he said, "I shall peruse these at my leisure, and, I doubt not, call upon you frequently for explanations."

The young man rode on at his side, modestly waiting to be questioned.

"What is your name, sir?" asked Von Dessauer, so that all the escort might hear.

"I am called Johann Pyrmont," said the youth, promptly, and with engaging frankness; "my father is a Hamburg merchant, trading to the Spanish ports for oil and wine, but I follow him not. I had ever a turn for drawing and the art of design."

"Also for having your own way, as is common with the young," said the Ambassador, smiling shrewdly. "So, against your father's will, you apprenticed yourself to an architect?"

The young man bowed.

"Nay, sir," he said, "but my good father could deny me nothing on which I had set my mind."

"Not he," muttered Dessauer under his breath; "no, nor anyone else!"

It had been a favorite scheme of dead princes of Courtland to unite to their fat acres and populous mercantile cities the hardy mountaineers of pastoral uplands of Kernsberg.

There had come to Joan's father, Henry, called the Lion, and the late Prince Michael of Courtland, a thought. One had a daughter, the other a son. So with that frank carelessness of the private feelings of the individual which has ever distinguished great politicians, they decreed that, as a condition of succession, their male and female heirs should marry each other.

This bond of heritage-brotherhood, as it was called, had received the sanction of the Emperor in full Diet, and now it wanted only that the Duchess Joan of Hohenstein should be of age in order that the provinces might at last be united and the long wars of highland and lowland at an end.

The plan has taken everything into consideration except the private characters of the persons principally affected, Prince Louis of Courtland, and the young Duchess Joan.

It was the last day of the famous tournament of the Black Eagle in the princely city of Courtland. Prince

of Beauty, looked down upon them with interest, seeing that they were men who came, and that one at least was young.

Fifty knights with white plumes on their helmets had charged fifty wearing black, and the combat still raged.

"The Blacks have it!" said Dessauer, after regarding the melee with interest. "We have come in time to see the end of the fray. Would that he had also seen the shock!"

And indeed the Blacks seemed to have carried all before them. They were mostly bigger and stronger built men, knights of the landward provinces, and their horses, great solid-boned Saxon chargers, had by sheer weight borne their way through the lighter ranks of the Baltic knights on the white horses.

Not more than half a dozen of these were now in the saddle, and all over the field were to be seen black knights receiving the submission of knights whose broken spears and tarnished plumes showed that they had succumbed in the charge to superior weight of metal. For, so soon as a knight yielded, his steed became the property of his victorious foe, and he himself was either carried or limped as best he could to the pavilion of his party, there to remove his armor and send it also to the victor—to whom, in literal fact, belonged the spoils.

Of the half-dozen white knights who still kept up the struggle, one shone pre-eminent for dashing valor. Set upon by more than a score of riders, he still managed to evade them, and even when all his side had submitted and he alone remained—at the end of the lists to which he had been driven, he made ready for a final charge into the scarce broken array of his foes, of whom more than twenty remained still on horseback in the field.

But though his spear struck true in the middle of his immediate antagonist's shield and this opponent went down, it availed the brave white knight nothing. For at the same moment half a score of lances struck him on the shield, on the breastplate on the visor bars of his helmet, and he fell heavily to the earth. Nevertheless, scarcely had he touched the ground when he was again on his feet. Sword in hand, he stood for a moment unscathed and undaunted, while his foes, momentarily disordered by the energy of the charge, reined in their steeds ere they could return to the attack.

But at this moment the Princess Margaret, sister of the reigning Prince, rose in her place and threw down the truncheon, which in such cases stops the combat.

"The black knights have won," so she gave her verdict, "but there is no need to humiliate or injure a knight who has fought so well against so many. Let the white knight come hither—though he be of the losing side. His is the reward of highest honor. Give him a steed, that he may come and receive the meed of bravest in the tourney!"

The knights of the black were manifestly a little disappointed that after their victory one of their opponents should be selected for honor. But there was no appeal from the decision of the Queen of Love and Beauty. For that day she reigned alone, without council or diet imperial.

The white knight came near and said something in a low voice, unheard by the general crowd, to the Princess.

"I insist," she said aloud; "you must unhelm, that all may see the face of him who has won the prize."

Whereat the knight bowed and undid his helmet. A closely-cropped fair-haired head was revealed, the features clearly chiseled and yet of a massive beauty, the head of a marble emperor.

"My brother—you!" cried Margaret of Courtland in astonishment.

The Ambassador looked, curiously at his secretary. He was standing with eyes brilliant as those of a man in fever. His face paled even under his dusky tan. His lips quivered. He had straightened himself up as brave and generous men do when they see a deed of bravery done by another, or like a woman who sees the man she loves publicly honored.

"The Prince!" said Johann Pyrmont, in a voice hoarse and broken; "it is the Prince himself."

And on his high seat the States Councillor, Leopold von Dessauer, smiled well pleased.

After the tourney of the Black Eagle Leopold von Dessauer had gone to bed early, feeling younger and lighter than he had done for years. Part of his scheme for these northern provinces of his fatherland consisted in gradual substitution of a few strong states for many weak ones. For this reason he smiled when he saw the eyes of his secretary shining like stars.

Von Dessauer was lying awake and thinking of the strange chances which help or mar the lives of men and women, when a sudden sense of shock, a numbness spreading upward through his limbs, the rising of rheum to his eyes, and a humming in his ears announced the approach of one of those attacks to which he had been subject ever since he had been wounded in a duel some years before—a duel in which his present Prince and his late master, Karl, the Miller's son, had both been engaged.

The Ambassador called for Jorian in a feeble voice. That light-sleeping soldier immediately answered him.

"Give me my case of medicine,"

said the old man: "that in the bag of rough Silesian leather. So! I feel my old attack coming upon me. It will be three days before I can stir. Yet must these papers be put in the hands of the Prince early this morning. Ah, there is my little Johann; I was thinking about her—him, I mean. Well, he shall have his chance."

He made a wry face as a twinge of pain caught him. It passed and he resumed.

"Go, Jorian," he said, "step light upon his chamber door. There is much to order ere at nine o'clock he must adjourn to the summer palace to meet the Prince."

Jorian rapped low, with more reverence than is common from captains to secretaries of legations. At the sound Johann Pyrmont clasped his hand to the hip where his sword should have been.

"Who is there?" he asked, turning about with keen alertness, and in a voice which seemed at once sweeter and more commanding than even the most imperious master-builder would naturally use to his underlings.

"I—Jorian! His Excellency is taken suddenly ill and bade me come for you."

Immediately the secretary opened the door, and in a few seconds stood at the old man's bedside.

Here they talked low to each other, the young man with his hand laid tenderly on the forehead of his elder. Only their last words concern us at present.

"This will serve to begin my business and to finish yours. Thereafter the sooner you return to Kernsberg the better. Remember, the moon cannot long be lost out of the sky without causing remark."

The young man took the Ambassador's papers and went out. Dessauer took a composing draught and lay back with a sigh.

"It is humbling," he said to Jorian, "that to compose your will, you must do it through the heart, but in the case of the old through the stomach."

"'Tis a strange draught he hath gotten," said the soldier, indicating the door by which the secretary had gone forth. "If I be not mistaken, much water shall flow under bridge ere his sickness be cured."

As soon as he had reached his own chamber Johann laid the papers upon the table without glancing at them. He went again to the window and looked across the city.

"To-day I shall see the Prince!" he said.

It was exactly nine of the clock when he set out for the palace. He was attired in the plain black dress of a secretary, with only the narrowest corded edge and collar of rough scuffed gold.

At the great door of the outer pavilion he intimated his desire to the officer in charge of the guard.

(To be continued.)

HIS TRIUMPH WAS SWEET.

Man Who Was Refused a Stamp Returns to Boast of Success.

"Do you remember," said a middle-aged man, as he entered a stationery store and was asked what could be done for him—"do you remember of my being in here about four weeks ago?"

"I can't say that I do," was the reply.

"Don't you remember I asked you to give me a postage stamp to put on a letter, and you refused to do so without the cash?"

"Postage stamps cost money."

"Yes, I know, but I explained to you that I was in love with a widow and had written to ask for her hand. You said it didn't make a damned bit of difference to you who I was writing to and you didn't care a copper whether I got the widow or not. You ought to remember that."

"Yes, I think I do. Well, what what is it to-day? Still after a postage stamp?"

"No, sir, I'm not. I came in here to tell you that in spite of your meanness the widow is mine. When I went out of here I found a cent on the sidewalk and bought a postal card with it, and she accepted my love the same as if I had sent a letter."

"Then you are happy, no doubt?"

"I am, sir. The widow is worth seven hundred dollars, fat as butter and as good-natured as a goose, and I am walking around on eggs. Yes, sir, I am a happy man, sir, and you be hanged, and go to grass, sir, and I wouldn't patronize you if penholders were selling five for a cent. That's all. Good-day, sir."

THE DUEL

By Lewis A. Wentworth

"But your promise, Senorita," cried Unzar, his swarthy face growing darker; "do you remember? or has another thought you to forget?"

She hesitated—and was lost. A hand closed upon her wrist with crushing force, and a voice low and tense with emotion cried: "I have my answer, Senorita, but remember my oath—I am here to keep it."

"Your oath," she murmured, attempting to throw off his hand, "your oath!"

Then the recollection aroused her; she swept back the thick hair from her high forehead and turned upon him, righteous indignation visible in every feature.

"Your oath," she repeated, scornful; "have you not already forgotten all claims upon me? Have you not left me neglected these many years? Did you think none other would seek me? Am I so ugly as that? Senor, a broken heart is healed only by another love. Is it strange, then, that I should love another? And my promise—"

She paused abruptly and again that thoughtful look came into her eyes.

She glanced at that tall, handsome figure before her, drawn up to its full height, the bold, black eyes gazing into her own, and her mind wandered off to that day, ten years before, when she had last seen him in old Madrid.

She remembered the promise given that day; but ten years was a long time and she had given up all hope—and was now to be the bride of another. But did she love the other?

"Oh! Unzar," she cried, "I know not what to say. I thought you had forgotten me. I have heard nothing from you since that day ten years ago. Felipe wanted me and I—"

"And do you love this Felipe?" he burst out, his face flaming.

"I—God help me! no, no, no! I almost hate him!" Her eyes were swimming, her brow had doubled into little fists.

"But, Unzar," she continued, clutching his arm, her emotion forgotten in an instant. "You must not stay here, for should he see you he would either kill you or force you to fight. In either case it would be death, for no one has escaped him yet."

"You forget, Senorita, that I am master of the art," and he touched his knife.

"But Felipe uses only pistols," she cried. Unzar's face darkened.

"I care not what he uses," he vociferated. "I would fight him with any weapon. I must fight him, for I have sworn you shall be my bride."

"And I swear she will not!"

Mona uttered a scream, and even Unzar recoiled a step at this unexpected retort. The intruder was Felipe, attired in all his glory, skin-tight pantaloons, with silver buttons up and down the legs; yellow boots with high heels set off with silver spurs, a short coat with gold buttons and a broad-brimmed, high-crowned sombrero covered with silver braid. He was tall and wiry, his eyes black and piercing and his face, usually expressionless, now wore an ugly look. For a moment the men gazed at each other in silence.

"By what right to you swear?" demanded Unzar.

"I am her accepted suitor," replied Felipe.

"I claim a previous right," declared Unzar.

"That for your right," sneered Felipe, blowing a cloud of smoke into the other's face.

"You will pay for that, you peon," cried Unzar, livid with rage. "Name your time and place."

Felipe smiled scornfully.

"At sunrise beyond the eucalyptus grove—with pistols."

Mona uttered a low cry at the last words which brought that wolfish smile to Felipe's lips.

"I will not disappoint you, senor," said Unzar.

"Farewell, then," sneered Felipe. "I will leave you with your—"

Unzar's hand unconsciously sought his knife, and Felipe smiled as he backed through the doorway, the word unspoken.

The first grey streaks of dawn were just visible in the eastern sky when two figures emerged from the grove of eucalyptus trees and glanced about. One was a gray-haired man bent with age, his companion a tall, erect figure, whose face was covered with a mask of black silk. The old man was Tony, the keeper of the inn where Unzar had passed the night; he was yet but half awake, and as he sank down on the ground to wait his head nodded and soon fell forward, his chin resting on his chest. The other stood near, toying idly with a pistol, glancing now and then toward the trees that hid from view the town, and listening intently at the least sound.

And so Felipe and his two companions found them just as the sun threw his first golden rays into the valley. For a brief moment they gazed upon the scene in silence, then broke into loud laughter, which aroused old Tony, who scrambled to his feet.

"Why does the senor wear a mask?" asked Felipe, striding toward the old man, who met him half way.

"That he may not be recognized should he win or know if he fail."

The toss of a coin gave the innkeeper the honor of the count.

The two countless figures faced each other 30 yards apart, Felipe as cool and unconcerned as though about to indulge in target practice, the other

apparently nervous, as though fearing some interruption.

"Remember," Tony called, "at the word three you are to raise your pistols and fire."

"Yes, ready," said Felipe.

There was a moment's pause, then: "One."

The masked figure started slightly at some noise coming from the trees. "Two."

They both bent slightly forward. "Three!" cried Tony, in a shrill voice.

Simultaneously with the two reports that rang as one came a wild yell from among the trees. Old Tony and the two Mexicans turned—the other two lay motionless where they had fallen—to see a half-clothed, disheveled looking figure running toward them. Then they bent over the fallen duellists. Old Tony tore away the shirt to find the wound, then paused, his face ashen, his eyes bulging.

"My God!" he cried, and again, "My God!" The newcomer thrust the old man aside and he stripped off the mask.

"Mona!" cried the old man, crossing himself, his eyes dilated with horror.

"Yes, Mona, and you've killed her, you devil! Do you hear! Killed her!"

"I thought it was you—"

"Me!" cried Unzar, madly shaking the other. "Didn't you 'drug me while I slept?"

"No, senor, no! By the Virgin, I swear it!"

"Who did, then?" Unzar vociferated, his grief relaxing.

"I don't know," whined Tony, caressing his throat. "When I knocked at your door you—she came out wearing the mask. It was your room, your clothes, your—"

But Unzar was not listening, he was gazing at the motionless form at his feet.

"My God," he murmured, "and she did this to save me."

Then his eye caught the quiver of an eyelid.

"There, give us that bottle, quick!" and he poured a few drops of the fiery stuff between her white lips, holding his breath in suspense.

The bosom swelled slightly, then fell, and a convulsive shudder passed over her, the eyes opened, looking straight into Unzar's.

"Mona, Mona!" he cried, "speak, it is I, Unzar, do you know me? Tell me where you are hurt."

She gazed for a moment bewildered.

"I—I am not hurt," she cried, sitting up. "I guess I fainted." Then she became conscious of her condition and hastily sprang to her feet and drew on the coat she had worn.

Unzar was gazing at her, his very soul in his eyes. "And you did this for me," he said, drawing her to him.

"You could not shoot," she replied, "and I could; he taught me," and she pointed to the motionless figure, over which the two Mexicans were talking excitedly.

"I feel myself a coward," said Unzar, "unworthy of such love. And you have robbed me of the only opportunity I had to prove my love for you."

"No," said Mona, "there is one way."

"Then name it," he cried.

"By keeping your oath," she answered, raising her lips to his.

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"TOUCHINESS" OF WIRELESS.

Like Some People It Is Sensitive to the Least Variations of Conditions.

Wireless telegraphy is compared by a writer in *Cosmos* to a good but excitable man, capable of doing excellent work, but apt to "fly off the handle" on the slightest provocation. This simile is suggested by a recent communication in *Drude's Annalen*, in which Mr. Sachs, a German experimenter, reports on the way in which space-telegraphy is affected by environments of various kinds. From Sachs' results it would appear that wireless is very delicate and susceptible to outside influences. Says the writer in *Cosmos*:

"By placing the transmitting and receiving apparatus at different heights above the ground, he found that the transmission is much better at a certain height than near the earth. The augmentation of effect with height proves that the conductivity of the earth interferes, and that the electromagnetic energy is powerfully absorbed and slightly reflected. Besides, it is necessary to take into account the length of waves employed; for short waves transmitted over terra firma the author concludes that the influence of the earth is always clearly unfavorable. On the contrary, if the Herizian waves used are of great length, the earth, and especially the sea, may be sufficiently conducting to aid transmission to an important degree. The practical use of the system has already shown the fact that communication over the sea is easier than over continents."

Mr. Sachs, continuing his experiments along this line, has shown that the neighborhood of human beings acts unfavorably on the transmission, and especially the reception of signals. Whence it would appear that, although the new telegraphy is doubtless of great service to humanity, it is certainly very delicate and susceptible, like certain people who are excellent at bottom, but who are affected in an exaggerated way by the least excitement."

NEWS SUMMARY

James Smith was inaugurated governor general of the Philippines on the 20th.

Five persons were killed and six injured by a dynamite explosion near Finmark, New Ontario.

At a fire in the Juarez, Mexico, custom house, Captain Rutillo Martinez of the gendarmerie was killed by a live electric wire.

Six people were killed and a dozen wounded as the result of a dynamite explosion which wrecked two buildings in Havana.

It is reported in St. Petersburg that the Japanese are erecting fortifications in southern Saghalin, contrary to the treaty of Portsmouth.

General Nicoloff of the artillery has been assassinated at Warsaw. He was erroneously thought to be a member of the field courtmartial.

Revolutionaries made an attempt to burn down the political prison, at Odessa. They only succeeded, however, in partially burning the roof.

Jockey Bertrand Frelshon was instantly killed and Jockey C. Ross sustained a fracture of the skull as a result of an accident in a race at Gravesend.

Judge Ben B. Lindsey, of Denver, was nominated for governor of Colorado at a convention of Independents, made up of Republicans, Democrats and others.

The paint shop of the M. K. & T. railway at Sedalia, Mo., in which were a number of passenger coaches, has been destroyed by fire, entailing a loss of \$100,000.

Eight masked and heavily armed men held the people of White Cloud, Mich., while they rifled the Newaygo County bank and attempted to rob the bank of R. Gannon & Son.

By a rear-end collision between regular and extra freight trains on the Great Northern on the high bridge at the west end of the Cut Banks, Mont., yards, five men were killed.

Smallpox no longer exists on the Isthmus. The steamer Trent sailed from Colon for Jamaica on the 20th, taking a clean bill of health for over 300 laborers who are being sent home.

The next meeting of the Isthmian canal commission is scheduled for October 1 on the Isthmus of Panama, but the meeting may be deferred until November, at the time the President makes his visit.

The body of J. C. Goersch, aged 28, an architect with an office in Los Angeles, was found in Laurel canyon, north of Hollywood, by two young ladies. He had shot himself through the head with a rifle.

Dr. E. A. Hatfield fatally shot, at Williamson, W. Va., his brother, Captain Hatfield, son of "Daredevil" Anse Hatfield, who gained much notoriety because of his connection with the famous feud of that name.

Tobacco users and theatre-goers among college students of Syracuse, N. Y., university must pay full tuition, according to an edict issued by Chancellor James R. Day, when college opened for the fall term.

In the wreck of Charles Schwab's automobile at St. Martin de Croix, France, J. G. Schmidlapp, president of the United Savings and Trust company of Cincinnati, was injured, and his daughter, Charlotte, killed.

Edward Bludsoe, aged 74 years, was murdered at his home in Leavenworth, Kan., in a most cold-blooded manner and his house set on fire. The murderer, evidently actuated by robbery, had crushed Bludsoe's head with an ax.

Newspapers of Madrid are of the opinion that the situation in Morocco is disquieting. El Patis forces that foreign intervention will be necessary, the organization of an international police being insufficient to preserve order.

Reports received in Manila from the punitive expeditions sent into the interior of the island of Leyte, in pursuit of the Pulajanes, state that as a result of the recent attacks by the troops, the Pulajanes have broken up into small parties.

Owing to the deadlock between the carmen and the United Railroads of San Francisco, over the selection of a third arbitrator, Thornehill Mullaly favors the suggestion that two outsiders be agreed upon as arbitrators, these two to select a third man.

Without having regained consciousness long enough to tell the police a complete story of the attack made on him, William Friede, the proprietor of a clothing store in San Francisco, died from the effects of a brutal beating inflicted on him in his store.

Charles Conley, a negro, who attacked and seriously injured Mrs. Beatrix Frankish and her daughter on a public road near Washington, Dela., has been sentenced to fifty years imprisonment and to receive thirty lashes at the whipping post.

Governor Pardee of California, has issued a proclamation warning all corporations which do not pay by November 1 the \$20 corporation tax, together with the fine of \$10 for delinquency from September 1, will forfeit their right to do business in California.